

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos

- **Town:** Paphos

- **Programme of study
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων – Εξ
αποστάσεως

In English:

Distance Master in Business Administration

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek, English
- **Programme's status:** Currently operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** Public Administration,
Business Management

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

- 1. The conventional and proposed distance learning program are very similar. It is important to consider how the two programs can be differentiated, in ways other than the delivery mode and approach.**

Our comments:

The two programmes (conventional and distance) are not easy to differentiate due to DOATAP provisions, in terms of PLOS, CLOS and content. Delivery mode is distinct. As per the conditions of law 3328/2005:

"The equivalence of the degrees awarded by Institutions such as an "Open University", of "Distance Studies" and "External Degrees" is recognized provided that the specific Institutions have a special study program for this purpose. In particular, if the program is provided by an Institution that offers full-time study and distance learning, the distance learning program should be offered in a conventional manner and with the same quality characteristics."

https://www.doatap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ΕΠΙΚΑΙΡΟΠΟΙΗΜΕΝΟΣ-ΙΔΡΥΤΙΚΟΣ-ΝΟΜΟΣ-ΤΟΥ-ΔΟΑΤΑΠ-Ν.-3328_2005-1.pdf

- 2. Consider and monitor how the DMBA will affect admission to the existing conventional mode MBA program. The potential change in admission patterns will have implications for faculty and administrative staff workloads as well as implications for library and IT resources.**

Our comments:

No change in admission patterns is envisaged. Eventually, there will be no implications for faculty and administrative staff workloads.

- 3. Monitor and reflect on how the intended learning outcomes can be achieved in the distance learning mode of the MBA program.**

Our comments:

The way to ensure continuity is via setting the assessments of each course in accordance to the CLOs. The matching of the PLOs and CLOS doesn't change over time but the materials are updated to fit the CLOS and the assessments are designed to fit the CLOs every year. This way continuity is achieved.

- 4. Consider if there will be unbalanced distribution of students choosing the conventional versus the distance learning mode.**

Our comments:

Live experience shows that students are choosing the distance learning mode versus the conventional and not vice versa.

- 5. The proposed programme can benefit of running the Master Thesis in line/collaboration with the current/potential professional roles or tasks the students have.**

Our comments:

Done. Already, the proposed programme is benefitting by running the Master Thesis in line/collaboration with the current/potential professional roles or tasks the students have.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

- 1. Communication and cooperation among students.** The model of the proposed Distance Learning program is very much affected by the onsite/traditional philosophy of education, i.e. instructor-student communication by lectures and individual or group assignments. For example, the peer-reviewing method between individual students or between groups, would allow for student-to-student peer learning. This method makes continuous communication among them necessary and it takes place in a natural way, which should be enriched/embedded in teaching and learning processes. Peer learning should be monitored closely to ensure student participation in activities and collaborative work.

Our comments:

Done. To facilitate peer learning and peer interaction, all our study guides have incorporated asynchronous activities for peer support and assessed collaborative projects. Asynchronous activities such as jigsaws, progressing peer review of projects and asynchronous discussions or debates via fora are some of the activities that have already been added. You can see examples of such activities in *Annex 1_Peer_activities_examples*, e.g. jigsaws).

- 2. Focus more on asynchronous activities, as synchronous activities can present difficulties for students who cannot attend due to professional commitments. In addition to recorded lectures, assignments and tasks as well as discussions. Progressing peer-reviewing tasks are asynchronous and demand student-to-student communication. Consider incorporating such interactive activities more explicitly in the study guides.**

Our comments:

Done. Our study guides have at least 12 interactive asynchronous activities (one per week) that promote interaction with the content, the peers or the tutors.

Activities such as jigsaws, peer reviews and team projects have already been incorporated (see *Annex 1_Peer_activities_examples*).

E.g.

- in DMBA561 two jigsaws have been incorporated in the study guide. The first takes place during weeks 1-4 and the second, during weeks 7-8.
- In DMBA571, during weeks 1-6 students are asked to collaboratively work in groups on a case study that will be later on be peer-reviewed.

- 3. During the MBA Master Thesis period the institution should encourage the students to do their thesis in a company and not to follow the traditional way of research. This is one of the unique characteristics that MBA carries on. Thus the university should create links with companies in Cyprus and Abroad in order the MBA students to pursue their thesis in a professional environment. This will give them the opportunity to create connections with the market and will make them employable in the very challenging times we experience.**

Our comments:

Done. See response in section 1.5 of the EEC report.

4. **Over the years there are various international competitions that takes place. The university should encourage teams of the students to participate. This will make them become more competitive.**

Our comments:

Although students are already strongly encouraged to actively participate in extracurricular activities, participation in various international competitions is intended to intensify.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The EEC is satisfied with the academic staff supporting the program.

To teach successfully to an MBA program an academic should hold this degree. MBA has distinct characteristics and it is much different from conventional Master courses. The committee realised that few members of the faculty hold an MBA.

Our comments:

Our faculty is comprised of well experienced academics combining both an academic and business background.

The committee would welcome talks from MBA graduates which will share their experience with current students and they would provide advices for future career.

Our comments:

Sharing experiences and advice for future career between MBA graduates and current students is a dimension of the programme already in place, which nevertheless, will be further intensified.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
(ESG 1.4)

The students were 100% professionals (working in different sectors, e.g. hospital, industry, public sector, etc.) and they emphasized the benefits of the online courses provided due to Covid-19 pandemic.

One suggestion could be that a potential bi-modality version (some meetings in the premises or some face-to-face meetings) would also benefit them to strength their relationships and work as group.

Our comments:

Bi-modality versions can be considered in the future upon special provisions and distance learning regulations

Another suggestion could be that the final exams can be held online but to ensure that the LO and academic principles are followed.

Our comments:

Final exams are already held online following specific CYQAA regulations, as well as DOATAP provisions (for the Greek students).

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

1. **There seems to be a reliance on end of year exams that take place mainly in a face-to-face format and have been transferred to online assessment during the pandemic. An option would be to think about alternative forms of assessment, e.g., coursework or project-based work. We recommend that innovating assessment practice e.g., use of open book exams (in addition to proctoring systems, continues after the pandemic as it is more suitable for this type of programme and discipline. This is subject to professional and regulatory bodies' agreement.**

Our comments:

See response in section 4 above.

2. **We recommend that the induction becomes compulsory for all students as this will help with learning support and ensuring that the students benefitting further from the affordances of the learning platform.**

Our comments:

Done. Induction is envisaged for all students, at the beginning of each semester. See attached programme (*Annex 2_ Orientation Week DLU for Students 2021-22 fall*).

3. **We recommend that staff professional development around distance and online learning becomes part of a institutional professional accreditation programme.**

Our comments:

Done. Staff professional development around distance and online learning has already become part of an institutional professional accreditation programme (see attached *Annex 3_ Staff professional development in Distance Teaching*).

4. **Further attention should be given to enhancing the interactive elements in the programme's online platform to provide personalised feedback to student input.**

Our comments:

Done. The NUP Moodle system provides feedback via Assignment, Quiz and Forum enabled. Options include Feedback Comments, Annotate PDF, Feedback Files as well as Inline, Comments and File Feedback in Turnitin Report Dashboard where the Assignment module is connected to Turnitin automatically (Moodle Turnitin Official Plugin). Furthermore, activity feedback is provided and finally through Grade module options to provide feedback using Comments and/or File is enabled.

In addition to Moodle, our SIS (Student Information System) allows feedback for Assessment boards (Grading) per Student/Course.

5. **Registration to more databases would help the students to carry on higher quality of assignments and will motivate them to produce better work. Thus, we encourage subscription to WRDS and other highly rated databases.**

Our comments:

Done. Our Library has very credible resources and subscriptions to databases such as **Orbis & Fame** and **Thomson Reuter / Refinitiv Eikon** which greatly cover the needs of our students.

6. **The library should inform the student more on the resources it provides and all the resources they will be able to find. Continuous training should take place in order MBA student to be aware of everything that is being available.**

Our comments:

Done. Please see *Annex 4_NUP Library's Resources*.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

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B. Conclusions and final remarks

- 1. Consider how the two programmes can be more differentiated, considering that the conventional programme has blended learning elements, in ways other than the delivery mode and approach, for example revising some contents of the programme modules to ensure that they are aligned with in general with a prestigious Distance Learning program aims, objectives and learning outcomes or; consider the resource and pedagogical implications of running the two programs (i.e., existing conventional MBA and the proposed Distance Learning MBA) simultaneously.**

Our comments:

See response in section 1.1.

- 2. Consider and monitor how the DMBA will affect admission to the existing conventional mode MBA program, especially in the years to come since the University would like to expand the programme to international markets. Any potential change in admission patterns will have implications for faculty and administrative staff workloads as well as implications for library and IT resources.**

Our comments:

See response in section 1.2.

- 3. The proposed programme can benefit of running the dissertations in line/collaboration with the students' business, jobs, companies, current professional tasks and so on.**

Our comments:

See response in section 1.5.

- 4. The institutions should create collaboration with leading institutions in Europe with established program. This will raise the prestige of the course and it will bring success in the future.**

Our comments:

Collaborative arrangements with leading institutions in Europe are already under consideration as part of the University's internationalisation and extroversion strategy.

- 5. We should not underestimate the fact that in the future you may wish to provide specialist MBAs as well where you will attract particular teams of Professional (i.e. like MBA for Engineers, MBA (Finance), MBA (International Business). We mention this as there are similar programs abroad.**

Our comments:

We appreciate the comment.

- 6. It will be good to invite established academics from abroad to provide talks in your Online MBA. It will be easy and will help the course to develop.**

Our comments:

DONE. Our students already benefit either from events of invited academics from abroad. See attached (*Annex 5_Lectures by Invited Academics*).

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
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Professor Pantelis Sklias

Rector

Date: 16/12/21